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THE PROGRESS OF KANSAS.

ON the 30th of May, 1854, President Pierce signed the Kansas-Nebraska bill. Slavery had broken down the barriers of the Missouri Compromise and invaded a territory dedicated to Freedom, and the "irrepressible conflict," long dreaded and inevitable, was thus inaugurated upon the prairies of Kansas. Seven tragic years followed—years filled with the noise of contention; with fightings by day and burnings by night; with startling revelations of human heroism, patience, self-sacrifice, desperation and depravity, the scene closing with a natural calamity in the form of a drouth, when for seven months not a drop of rain fell upon the parched and gaping earth; and Kansas, on the 29th of January, 1861, was admitted into the Union as a Sovereign State.

On the day of her admission the young State was wrapped in a mantle of new-fallen snow. But scarce had the snow melted in the breeze and sun of spring before the country was enveloped in the flames of civil war, and with it came, for Kansas, four years crowded with trials greater than had marked the preceding seven years. Kansas was not, like the other Northern States, a spectator or an occasional participant in the struggle. On her eastern border lay Missouri, a bloody battle ground from first to last; on the south, the Indian Territory, its population divided between contending forces. Kansas was repeatedly invaded, her infant settlements laid in ashes, and on one black day more of her people's lives were sacrificed, on her own soil, than had been lost in all the quarrels, assassinations, skirmishes and forays of the Territorial period of seven years. During the Civil War it may be said that the entire able-bodied male population of Kansas was in arms, engaged in offensive or defensive warfare. The report of the Provost Marshal General of the U. S. Army, made in 1867, shows that Kansas contributed more soldiers to the army, in proportion to

population, than any other State of the Union; and that the percentage of Kansas soldiers killed or wounded was also greatest.

At the end of eleven years, then, during which Kansas had scarcely known the meaning of the word peace, the young State faced the future with almost empty hands, yet mindful of her motto—alike a history and a prophecy—“*Ad astra per aspera*,” “To the stars through difficulties.”

At the date of her admission Kansas had a population but little in excess of the number given by the census of 1860, viz., 107,206. During the Civil War, the development of the State practically ceased. The horrors of the “drouth of ’60” had been spread over the West by disheartened fugitives, and to these were added the too true stories of the perils and losses of the war. Few immigrants sought to remove to the scene of actual or possible conflict. In the summer of 1864, however, many of the Kansas volunteers returned to their homes; the end of the war was evidently approaching; immigration began again; and the census of 1865 showed that the population had grown to 140,179—an increase of 32,973 during five years, or about 6,500 per year. This increase, however, was really acquired during the year preceding the census.

The Constitution of 1859, called in Kansas “the Wyandotte Constitution,” under which the State was admitted, had defined its territorial limits as they have since remained, discarding what is now the State of Colorado, and leaving a parallelogram 400 miles long and 200 miles wide, and embracing 52,218,000 acres—a country which may be described as a rolling prairie one-third larger than England. And if, in 1865, the entire population of Kansas, men, women and children, had been evenly distributed over this immense area, each human being would have had nearly one square mile to himself or herself.

To reach this region, destined to be the scene of the most remarkable development in the history of the North American continent, there was, in 1865, but one line of railroad, touching the State at only two points on the extreme north-eastern border, Atchison and Elwood, and but one water-way, the Missouri River. No other Western State had begun its career of development under similar disadvantages.

To counterbalance every disadvantage there was the great fact, which has by degrees become known, not only throughout the

United States and Canada, but all over Europe, that in the exact geographical center of the Republic lies a body of 52,218,000 acres of land, nearly every acre of which, as agriculture is practiced in old and densely populated countries, may be subjected to the plow. Time has developed the fact that, underlying these acres, there are, by the latest estimates, 2,500,000,000 tons of coal; that there are valuable deposits of lead and yet more valuable mines of zinc; and that all over the State there are quarries of building stone. But the great fact was the existence of a vast body of arable ground lying ready for the farmer; and the accompanying knowledge that, of these acres, the greater part could be had for the taking, or purchased at a very low figure; that the price of one acre in the older States would secure 160 acres in Kansas. In this point of view it may be said that Kansas started, in 1865, with advantages such as no other Western State had ever enjoyed, in the existence of the Homestead Law and the land-grant railroad system.

The Homestead Law, in its original form, perhaps the most beneficent act ever passed by the Congress of the United States, was, after the war, made especially liberal as regards the ex-soldiers of the Union, allowing them to deduct from the five years of settlement and cultivation required by the act, the terms of their military service. This provision not only greatly stimulated immigration, but affected its character, and Kansas began, on the passage of the act, to fill up with a brave, hardy and patriotic population, accustomed to the discipline and endurance of army life, and bound together by the strongest ties, those of attachment to a common cause in the past, and of military comradeship. The system of land-grants to railroads, once universally supported, in Congress and out of it, by the people and by their representatives, and now as universally opposed, gave Kansas railways which the State would probably have never had otherwise, and threw upon the market millions of acres of land, contiguous to the lines, sold at low prices and on long time. The grantees made haste to dispose of the lands, for excellent reasons: to realize from the sale, and to promote the settlement of the country and thereby provide themselves business for the future. The fact that the land was granted in alternate sections prevented, as a rule, the sale of great blocks to individuals, and the railroad as well as the government land was thus sold in "quarter sections" of 160 acres—the area that experience has shown sufficient for a single

settler and his family. While the "land-grant system" led to abuses, and has served its time, it was an aid in the building up of Kansas in 1865 and for years thereafter, that no historian of the State can justly ignore.

In five years, from 1865 to 1870, the population of Kansas increased from 140,179 to 364,399, or at the rate of 159.95 per cent.—the largest percentage of increase the State has ever known. It was during these years that the "disbanded volunteer" was seeking a new home, and the era of railroad building was fairly inaugurated, the "Kansas Pacific" road having been completed to the west line of the State in 1869. In 1870, had the distribution of population, we have before used as an illustration, taken place, the Kansan, who in 1865 stood alone in the midst of a mile square, would have found himself one of a group of four persons.

The next period of five years, from 1870 to 1875, would probably have shown an equal ratio of increase, but for the financial crash of 1873, followed, in Kansas, in 1874, by a simultaneous visitation of drouth and grasshoppers. After these came an "aftermath" of liars, who scattered over the East and greatly exaggerated the calamity. But in spite of hard times, grasshoppers and "aid seekers," Kansas had acquired by 1875, a population of 528,349 inhabitants, and our illustrative group in the center of the "section" had grown to six persons.

From 1875 to 1880 Kansas made great progress. The population in those years swelled to 996,096, or at the rate of 88.52 per cent.; and the population per square mile increased to twelve persons.

In the years from 1880 to 1885 the population increased 272,466, making the total population 1,268,562, or fifteen persons to the square mile.

Thus, commencing in 1865 with 140,179 inhabitants, Kansas attained, in twenty years, to 1,268,562. But during the year 1885 occurred the most remarkable immigration ever known, and the population of the State is now fully 1,350,000.

This population in all its increase has shown a striking uniformity in character, the native born maintaining to the foreign born inhabitants an unvarying ratio of 8 to 1. A curious illustration of the fallacy of prophecy based on "scare" is shown in the proportion of white to colored persons. At the time of the famous "exodus" it was predicted that Kansas would be flooded with

indigent colored people from the South. The census shows that the white population is 1,220,355, and the colored population 48,207, or 25 whites to 1 black. In 1865 the population was 9 whites to 1 colored. It should be said, also, that the 48,000 people of color in Kansas are in no sense a public burden. They have done their full share, with their strong arms, toward the upbuilding of the State, which has been the scene of the first successful occupation and settlement of public lands by persons of African descent.

If the test of population is not deemed a fair one, and it is asserted that Kansas has filled up with poor people crowded out of the East and attracted by cheap lands, on which they have not been able to accumulate wealth or even a competency, the answer is the production of official figures. In round numbers the true valuation of property in Kansas in 1860 was \$31,000,000 ; in 1865, \$72,000,000 ; in 1870, \$188,000,000 ; in 1875, \$242,000,000 ; in 1880, \$321,000,000 ; and in 1885, \$550,000,000. These figures show that the State has increased in wealth even more rapidly than it has in population.

The value of the farm crops of Kansas for the five years ending with 1870 was, in round numbers, \$59,000,000 ; for the next succeeding five years their value was \$135,000,000 ; for the next five years, \$264,000,000 ; and for the five years ending with 1885 the farm crops of Kansas aggregated in value \$503,000,000. The farmers of Kansas have produced, in twenty years, crops the value of which aggregates the enormous sum of \$963,000,000.

The growth of a country in population and in wealth is not a gratifying fact if with it there is not a corresponding progress in intelligence. A million taken from or added to the population of China is a matter of indifference to the world at large. It is possible to imagine a country growing populous, and even rich, without contributing to the world's improvement ; a country filled with great land-holders, controlling a hopeless and ignorant tenantry ; or a country covered with great herds of cattle and sheep owned by a few rich men, and watched and tended by semi-barbarous herds-men, scarcely more intelligent than their four-footed charges.

Kansas has made as great progress in the matter of popular education as in material wealth. In 1861, the first year of her existence as a State, Kansas expended for the support of common schools only \$1,700 ; in 1885 the expenditures for the same purpose aggre-

gated \$2,259,479. In the five years from 1880 to 1885 there was expended on the common schools of Kansas \$12,630,480, and during the twenty-five years of her life as a State, Kansas has given to the cause of common school education \$30,219,202. And this money has been well spent. In 1880 there were in Kansas only 25,000 persons over ten years of age who could not read. The security against ignorance and its resultant ills is the presence of an army of 8,219 school-teachers, who "hold the fort" in 6,673 school-houses, this army being maintained at a cost of nearly two million dollars a year for salaries alone. The greater part of this expense is met by self-imposed taxation, but there is in reserve the permanent school fund of the State, which now aggregates \$3,500,000, with a million acres of land, yet unsold, destined to increase it to fifteen or twenty million dollars. The interest of this fund is, by a constitutional provision, sacredly set apart for the support of common schools. And crowning the common school system are the three State institutions, virtually a part of it,—the State University, the State Normal School, and the State Agricultural College,—all under the control of the State Legislature, supported by the State, and never to become exclusive or separated from the cause of free, popular, practical education.

The influence of the newspapers of the State, while no figures can ever measure it, will be acknowledged. These have increased from 27 in 1860 to 581 in 1885.

During the same period the churches have grown in number from 97 to 3,115.

The great features of a country's progress are its advance in population, in wealth, and in intelligence. These include everything. And, to sum up, the census reports establish the fact that the growth of Kansas has been unparalleled in the history of American States. In 1860 the thirty-third State of the Union in population, Kansas is now the fifteenth. Having in 1865 only 243,712 cultivated acres, her fields have enlarged in twenty years to 14,252,815 acres. Paying taxes in 1865 on 3,500,000 acres, the assessor now places on his roll 27,710,981 acres. In 1865 Kansas estimated the value of her live stock at \$7,324,000, the investment has grown to \$117,881,000. In 1864 there was not a mile of railway within the borders of the State; there are now 4,750 miles, and hundreds of miles are to be added during the present year. In 1865 the State gathered her children in 640 school-houses; 6,673

are now crowded with Kansas youth. In 1860 only ten Kansas towns had a population exceeding 500 ; in 1885 ninety-one towns had each over 1,000 population, and four cities—Topeka, Leavenworth, Atchison and Wichita—had each over 15,000 population.

The question may be asked, has this growth been due to transient or to permanent causes ? There have been numerous instances of equally suprising growth, from temporary or speculative reasons, as in the oil regions of the East and the mining regions of the West, followed by utter collapse. Is this history to repeat itself in Kansas ? Is what seems prosperity only a seeming ; the result of the stimulating treatment of land speculators, individual or corporate ?

It should be borne in mind, in considering these questions, that the reliance of Kansas is in her soil. The State does not depend on oil-wells which may cease to flow, or on placers that may be washed dry, or on quartz veins that may pinch out. Kansas is, as has been said, a great tract of 52,288,000 acres, containing a larger number of cultivable acres than any other State in the Union ; in fact, Kansas is the name of the largest agricultural area on the face of the globe, inhabited by a homogeneous population and governed by the same laws. But passing mention has been made of the coal, of the builing stone found everywhere, and of the lead and zinc deposits, for the future of Kansas rests on the fertility of her fifty-two million acres. Thirty years of cultivation, in the eastern section of the State, has witnessed no diminution in the productiveness of the soil. Kansas does not own an exhausted or worn-out field. Of the 52,288,000 acres, only about ten million have ever been broken by the plow. If in twenty years \$963,000,-000 worth of agricultural products have been turned off, with, at most, less than one-fifth of the State under cultivation, what may be expected during the next twenty years, while the remaining four-fifths are being converted into fenced fields and pastures ?

It can now be stated, with absolute certainty, that great areas in the Western third of Kansas are becoming more fertile ; better fitted and adapted to cultivation. Kansas has enjoyed the advantages growing out of the modern science of meteorology, and the records of faithful observers have demonstrated the reality of climatic changes, as has, also, the experience of thousands of practical farmers. The face of the earth has changed with that of the sky, and the hard, trampled buffalo-pasture has been transformed,

from the Missouri to the Colorado line, into mellow acres covered with high and waving grass—natural meadows, ready for the plow and the following reaper.

But the most assuring prophecy of the future of Kansas is the character of her population. From the date of her territorial organization to the present time Kansas has attracted the best blood and brain of the civilized world. Hither, thirty years ago, came thronging a host of bright and generous men, to oppose the aggression of slavery ; and when the Civil War was over, a hundred thousand soldiers of the Union established homes on our broad prairies. No State in the Union can boast of a braver or a more intelligent, enterprising, sober and law-respecting population ; and no country in the world can point to achievements or results rivaling those wrought by the citizens of Kansas. These people have wiped a desert from the map of the continent, and replaced it with a garden ; they have pushed the plains to the foot-hills of the mountains ; they have dotted the treeless prairies with forests ; and they are harvesting, each year, crops exceeding in value the products of all the gold and silver mines of the United States. The limits that bound the progress and development of a State having such a citizenship and such resources cannot now be defined ; but it is certain that, for at least a quarter of a century, the growth of Kansas will equal, if it does not excel, that of the past.

JOHN A. MARTIN.